diamonds and gold at several places in the country; and

(b) if so, the names of the places where prospecting is proposed to be done and the parties that are in the fray?

THE MINISTER OF STEEL AND THE MINISTER OF MINES (SHRI BIRENDRA PRASAD BAISHYA): (a) and (b) The National Mineral Policy, 1993 envisages that induction of foreign participation in exploration and mining for high value and scarce minerals shall be pursued. Foreign equity investment in joint ventures in mining promoted by Indian Companies would be encouraged. While foreign investment in equity would normally be limited to 50%, this limitation would not apply to captive mines of any mineral processing industry. Enhanced equity holding can also be considered on case to case basis. The foreign firms which intend to invest in prospecting of diamond and gold have to obtain the approval of FIPB in the first instance.

As per Mines and Minerals (Regulation and Development) Act, 1957 mining rights can be given only to a Indian National or a company defined in sub-section (1) of section (3) of the Companies Act, 1956. Provided that in respect of any mineral specified in the First Schedule, no prospecting licences or mining lease shall be granted except with the previous approval of the Central Government. The applications for grant of Prospecting Licence have to be filed and processed by respective State Governments as per the provisions of Mines and Minerals (Regulation and Development) Act, 1957 and the rules made thereunder.

21 cases for grant of aerial prospecting licence for gold etc. have been approved by Central Government as per proposals from the respective State Governments. No aerial prospecting licence for diamond has been approved till date by the Central Government.

Machinery used by the GSI

570. SHRI BHAGABAN MAJHI: Will the Minister of MINES be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that most of the machinery used by the Geological Survey of India are old aged and outdated;

(b) if so, the steps taken to ensure the modernisation and the replacement of the old machinery in Geological Survey of India; and

(c) the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STEEL AND THE MINISTER OF MINES (SHRI BIRENDERA PRASAD BAISHYA): (a) For want of replacement/renewal and upgradation due to resource constraints a large number of machinery and equipment in Geological Survey of India have become old.

(b) and (c) A sum of Rs. 936.95 crores has been projected as budget estimate for replacement/renewal and upgradation of machinery and equipment during IXth Plan period.

Budget provision for GSI has been considerably enhanced during the current financial year 1997-98 to enable GSI to carry out essential replacement/renewal of mchinery and equipment.

Deletion of Limestone and Bauxite

571. SHRIMATI URMILABEN:
CHIMANBHAI PATEL:
SHRI ANATRAY DEVSHANKER DAVE:

Will the Minister of MINES be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Government of Gujarat has represented for the deletion of limestone and bauxite from the list of scheduled minerals shown in Schedulc-I of the Mineral and Metals Regulation and Development Act, 1957;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the decision taken on the representation so far?